THE WITCHER®

THE BALLAD OF TWO WOLVES

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THE

WITCHER®

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The Witcher *game is based on the novels by Andrzej Sapkowski.*

THE WITCHER VOLUME 7: THE BALLAD OF TWO WOLVES

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CHAPTER ONE



NO ONE SLAYS MORE MONSTERS THAN THE HERO OF WHITE HAIR!

THOUSANDS MOWN DOWN BY HIS SWORD, SLASHED TO BITS WITH NO CARE!

SHINK!

FEAR NOT, O FAIR LADY, HE'LL BEAT DEATH IN ANY MATCH!

TEAR HIMSELF FROM THE BEAST'S CLAWS WITH NARY A SCRATCH!

CLANK!

OH, 'TIS GERALT OF RIVIA, MURDERER OF MONSTERS MATCHED BY NO OTHER--

"BY NO OTHER," 'CAUSE I'M GONNA *BLEED OUT* IF YOU DON'T *HELP ME!*

GERALT, YOU'VE OFFENDED ME!

THE ONLY HELP I CAN OFFER YOU IS MY HUMBLE BALLAD, PRAISING YOU IN NAME AND DEED.

YOU KNOW, I'D PREFER...

HNNG!

...YOU TAKE THAT LUTE...

AAA

...AND IF SOMEONE OR SOMETHING COMES AT ME FROM BEHIND...

FWOSH!

...SMASH IT OVER ITS FUCKING HEAD!

SMASH

DEAL?

Hmm...

DEAL!

ALL CLEAR!

Uh-huh...

SO, CAN I RETURN TO MY INCREDIBLY PRESSING TASK NOW?!

REMEMBER, I DO IT ALL FOR *YOU*. THIS BALLAD'LL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

SAYS HERE YOU OWE ME 50 CROWNS.

50 Crowns for cleaning cemetery of wraiths.

Aye, I CAN READ. DIDN'T YE KNOW WOMEN CAN READ?

THIS NOTICE'S EXPIRED.

YEAH, 'CAUSE I WIPED THEM ALL OUT.

Ach, WELL, NOBODY'S COME FORWARD ABOUT THE WRAITHS IN A LONG WHILE. SO WE MOVED OUR CEMETERY. YE COULD'VE JUST LET 'EM BE...

20 CROWNS AND A HOT MEAL! THAT'S OUR FINAL OFFER!

ME MOTHER-IN-LAW USED WITCHERS TO SCARE HER SON STRAIGHT AT BEDTIME. HE'D SHIT HIS BRITCHES IF'N HE SAW ONE. AND, WELL, I DID THE LAUNDRY THIS MORN, SO, YE UNDERSTAND...

BUT TRY YER LUCK OVER IN GRIMMWALD. HEARD THEY'VE A SPOT OF TROUBLE WITH A WEREWOLF. AND FOLKS ROUND THOSE PARTS'RE FLUSH WI' COIN!

TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?! PEOPLE REACT TO YOU LIKE THAT 'CAUSE ALL WITCHER STORIES ARE EITHER WARNINGS OR TRAGEDIES.

NOBODY CARES THAT YOU'RE OUT OF WORK, SOME SORT OF FADED MEMORY, OR ABOUT SOME WITCH'S LAMENTS IN A DARK WOOD...

PEOPLE NEED ENTERTAINMENT, EMOTION, THRILLS! JUST LET ME SING THEM MY BALLAD OF GERALT THE HERO. YOU'LL BE RAKING IN 300 CROWNS PER MONSTER!

No one slays more monsters than the hero of white hair!

Thousands mown down by his sword, slashed to bits with no care!

Fear not, o fair lady, he'll beat death in any match!

Tear himself from the beast's claws with nary a scratch!

Oh, 'tis Geralt of Rivia, murderer of monsters matched by no other!

WITH HIS FAMILY PACKAGE, HE'LL SLAY MONSTERS FOR YOUR WIFE, SIS, OR MOTHER!

CLAP!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

CLAP!

CLAP!

CLAP!

CLAP!

CLAP!

WHAT A UNIQUE PLEASURE IT IS TO PLAY FOR PEOPLE OF SUCH *DISCERNING* MUSICAL TASTE.

NOW, IF THERE'S A MONSTER BOTHERING YOU GOOD PEOPLE, a ***werewolf***, *perhaps...* I CAN PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH OUR WHITE-HAIRED HERO.

Ehhh--

Hmm!

Hmm...I THOUGHT YOU'D LOOK...

...*different.*

DIFFERENT? *Well, well.* WONDER WHY...

DON'T LOOK AT ***ME,*** GERALT!

IT'S NOT ***I,*** IT'S THE ***BALLAD!*** OUT OF NOTHING BUT MELODY AND LYRIC SHE SCULPTED A NEW YOU, A YOU THAT THE LADY HERE SAW IN HER HEART OF HEARTS.

RED.

HERE IN GRIMMWALD, THEY CALL ME ***RED.***

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, RED?

WELL, IT'S MY GRAN ACTUALLY.

DUNNO WHAT DANDELION HERE TOLD YOU, BUT I DON'T PROVIDE ***ELDERLY HOME CARE SERVICES.***

SHE'S BEEN ACTING... ***STRANGE...*** RECENTLY. SHE'S ***ANXIOUS*** AND ***UNCERTAIN.***

AND HER ***EYES...*** I'VE GOT THE STRANGE FEELING EVEN HER EYES'VE CHANGED.

THINK SOMEONE ***CURSED*** HER?

ACTUALLY, I THINK SHE'S SCARED. BECAUSE SHE'S IN DANGER.

GRIMMWALD WAS ONCE A *PROSPEROUS* LITTLE MOUNTAIN TOWN.

THE PEOPLE WERE *HAPPY.* LIVED SIMPLE LIVES THAT REVOLVED AROUND THE MINE.

"BUT EACH YEAR, THERE WAS A LITTLE LESS COPPER... UNTIL ONE DAY THERE WAS NONE. THE TOWN STARTED TO CRUMBLE A BIT.

"STILL, PLENTY OF PEOPLE STAYED, THEY WERE HAPPY HERE. GRIMMWALD WAS THEIR HOME.

"AND THEN, THE *HOGGE SISTERS* SHOWED UP."

THE HOGGE SISTERS, *eh?* MIGHT THEY BE THE HOGGES THAT WERE WORKING FOR THE *VIVALDIS' BANK* IN VIZIMA?

THE VERY SAME *MONEY-GRUBBING BITCHES!*

HA! THEY ASKED ME TO WRITE A BALLAD ONCE. FOR ONE OF THE BANK'S FOUNDING ANNIVERSARIES.

WHAT'D THEY DO?

"WE'VE GOT MOUNTAINS, LOVELY VISTAS AND HOT SPRINGS. THEY SAW TOURIST POTENTIAL IN ALL OF IT.

"PEOPLE WERE LEAVING BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE GRIMMWALD COULD SURVIVE WITHOUT THE MINE. SOLD THEIR HOMES TO THE SISTERS FOR A SONG.

"THE SISTERS STARTED FIXING IT ***AAAALL*** UP, OPENING FANCY NEW SHOPS, INNS, PUBS. AND SURE ENOUGH, THE ***RICH*** STARTED ***FLOODING IN.***"

SEEMS TO ME THEY DID SOME GOOD ROUND HERE.

Oh, FOR THE ***TOWN,*** SURE. FOR THE TOWN***ES***-- NOT NECESSARILY.

PRICES WENT THROUGH THE ROOF. LIVING IN GRIMMWALD WAS SUDDENLY A LUXURY NOT EVERYONE COULD AFFORD.

EVEN MORE TOWNSFOLK STARTED FLEEING. AND THE GLEEFUL HOGGES ***SWOOPED IN,*** BUYING UP THEIR HOMES FOR PENNIES.

YOUR GRANDMA'S AFRAID OF MOVING OUT?

SHE'D ***NEVER*** LEAVE. AND THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE HER IN TOWN.

BUT SHE OWNS A TAVERN THAT'S FAMOUS THROUGHOUT THE NORTHERN KINGDOMS. A TAVERN THE HOGGES WANT FOR THEMSELVES. GRAN'S BEEN TELLING THEM ***NO*** FOR MONTHS AND NOW I THINK THE SISTERS WILL... STOP ***ASKING.***

"SOME TIME AGO, A ***WERE-WOLF*** STARTED TERRORIZING THE TOWN.

"THE RICH AREN'T AFRAID, THEY CAN AFFORD PROTECTION. BUT THE ***LESS WELL OFF*** STARTED LEAVING. DOING WHAT? SELLING THEIR PROPERTY FOR PENNIES...

"...THE WEREWOLF'S SUPPOSED TO SCARE OFF THE REST OF THE OLD TOWNSPEOPLE. PEOPLE LIKE MY GRAN."

THE INN'S SILVER SERVICE DISAPPEARED INTO THIN AIR. AND SHE'S BEEN WAKING UP AT NIGHT IN A COLD SWEAT, CURSING THE SISTERS AND THEIR SERVANT PIOTER.

WHEN I ASK, SHE CLAMS UP. PROUD LADY, MY GRAN. DOESN'T WANT TO SCARE ME.

'CAUSE SHE'S ***PLENTY*** SCARED HERSELF.

MAYBE SHE'S WORRIED YOU'LL DO SOMETHING UNWISE, GET YOURSELF *HURT.*

I COULD GIVE A *RAT'S ARSE!* WOULD YOU TALK TO HER? MAYBE YOU CAN REASSURE HER.

MAMA ELA

SOME SAY THEY'RE THE BEST POTATO PANCAKES IN ALL TEMERIA.

I'VE *HEARD* THEY'RE THE BEST IN THE *NORTHERN KINGDOMS.*

!

NEVER BEEN OUTSIDE TEMERIA MESELF, BUT I HOPES THEY'LL LIVE UP TO YE GENTLEMEN'S EXPECTATIONS.

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT, BUT I DON'T LIKE TO EAT WITH MY HANDS.

I'D KILL FOR A *SILVER* FORK AND KNIFE.

I'VE NAUGHT BUT WOODEN CUTLERY. I'LL BRING IT TO YE, BUT I PROMISE YE THESE PANCAKES ARE BEST EATEN BY HAND.

NOTHING SILVER AT HAND? SEEMS ***DANGEROUS***, WITH A WEREWOLF PROWLING AROUND THESE PARTS.

Even a ***spoon***'d be useful.

I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING... I'VE FOUGHT A FAIR FEW OF THE BEASTS IN MY TIME.

WE AIN'T TALKIN' 'BOUT PANCAKES HERE, ARE WE?

I LIKE TO MIX BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE.

THE WEREWOLF AIN'T THE PROBLEM. HE NEVER HURT NOBODY.

CAN'T SAY THE SAME FOR THE HOGGE GIRLS, NOW...

...THEY'VE RUINED MORE'N THEIR SHARE OF LIVES ROUND HERE.

TOLD YE! SHE'S GOT A PROBLEM WITH THEM!

FOR A WOMAN LIVING IN CONSTANT FEAR, SHE SURE MAKES ONE ***HELL*** OF A PANCAKE!

THIS CALLS FOR A BALLAD!

SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE SISTERS, ***THAT'S*** CLEAR ENOUGH. BUT THE ***WEREWOLF*** DOESN'T SCARE HER. MAYBE THIS WHOLE SILVER SITUATION'S A COINCIDENCE, AND SHE HAS NOTHING TO FEAR?

YOUR FRIEND'S BALLAD ***DIDN'T*** SAY YOU WERE SO QUICK TO ***GIVE UP...***

When a lady asks,
Geralt stays the course.

He set off for the truth,
on a hero's horse.

He beheld the darkest secret
of the Hagge three.

Three werewitches slain,
though he barely made it free.

THE LADY OF THE GATE THANKED HIM OH SO--

QUIET! Someone's coming.

Huh?!
TAKE ME TO THE HOGGES.
BUSY, THEY ARE!
IF'N YE CAME FOR ALMS OR A JOB, AIN'T NO MONSTERS HERE!
AIN'T THERE? DANDELION, DIDN'T WE HEAR THAT A WEREWOLF'S BEEN PROWLING AROUND THESE PARTS?
Well, there's no ballad about it yet
DANDELION!
Oh yes! ALL OF GRIMMWALD'S ABUZZ ABOUT HIM!
THERE'S FUCK ALL FOR YE HERE, WITCHER!
I'S THE PROTECTORER OF GRIMMWALD. I'S SMASHIN' MONSTER HEADS!
Hmm, SOUNDS LIKE THERE ARE SOME MONSTERS AROUND HERE. OR AIN'T THERE?
THE SISTERS IS BUSY!
FUCK OFF!

Ugh, RED WON'T BE HAPPY ABOUT THIS...

OI! DOGSLAYER, *WAIT!*

Dunno why the fuck and don't ***wanna*** know. BUT THE SISTERS WANTS TO TALK.

Hm...

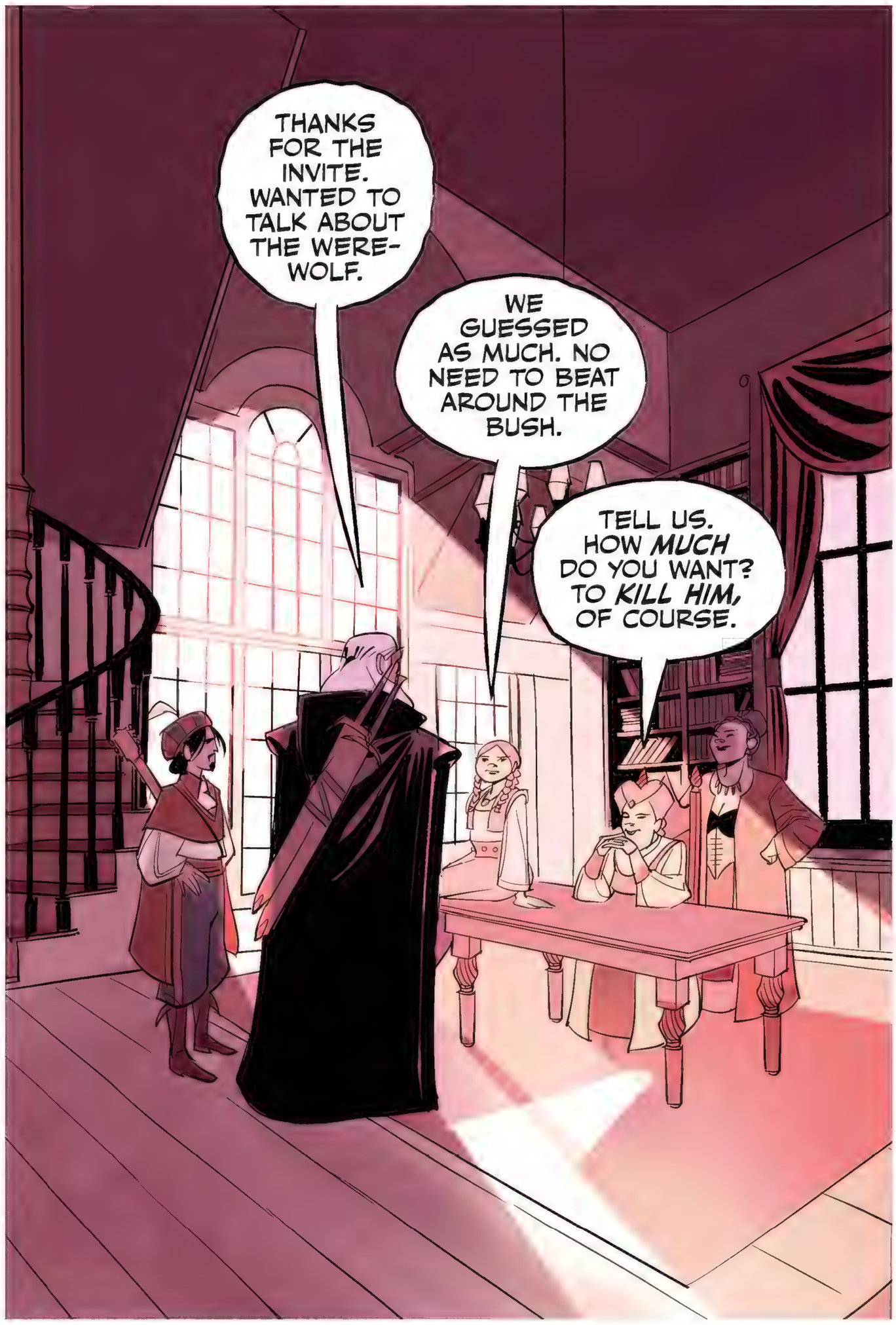
ME PIPE DON'T BE GETTIN' SOFT WHEN I SEES A WEREFUCKER, *oh* ***NO!***

'BOUT TWO WEEKS PAST, TWO SHIFTY DOPPLERS WAS COZYIN' UP TO GOOD PEOPLE, SHAPE-SHIFTIN' FUCKERS TRICKSIN' FOLKS OUTTA THEIR COIN!

GOT ONE ***GOOD***, DIDN'T I? POPPED ONE RIGHT THROUGH 'IS ***EYE*** FROM A FURLONG AWAY WITH THIS BEAUT! SO ***BEWARE!***




...


THANKS FOR THE INVITE. WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THE WERE-WOLF.
WE GUESSED AS MUCH. NO NEED TO BEAT AROUND THE BUSH.
TELL US. HOW *MUCH* DO YOU WANT? TO *KILL HIM,* OF COURSE.


Sorry?


Wait, WHA--?!


300 CROWNS.
AND *ANOTHER* 300 FOR A BALLAD CHRONICLING THE TALE!

FORGIVE ME, GERALT.

WHEN A QUESTION OF MONEY ARISES, I DON'T *THINK,* I *ACT.*

THAT'S *CURIOUS.* BECAUSE I HEARD YOU LADIES HIRED THE WEREWOLF YOURSELVES.

YOU'RE NOT THE *FIRST,* WITCHER.

WE HEAR THE RUMORS, TOO.

ONCE.

OR *TWICE* A WEEK.

THIS TOWN WAS *DYING.*

WE BROUGHT IT BACK FROM THE BRINK.

LIKE OUR FAITHFUL *PIOTER* HERE.

MANY OF THE OLD TOWNIES HAVE STEADY WORK, THANKS TO *US.*

AT YER SERVICE!

BUT *SOME* FOLKS DON'T LIKE CHANGE. AND WHEN PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS TO FACE, THEY *MAKE UP STORIES* THAT HELP THEM COPE WITH THOSE PROBLEMS.

THAT'S WHY *HALF* OF GRIMMWALD'S MUTTERING ABOUT *THREE CRAZY SISTERS* WHO'RE TAKING OVER THE TOWN, USING A *WEREWOLF* TO DO THEIR DIRTY WORK.

HANG ON, THIS SOUNDS LIKE THE START OF ONE OF THOSE *"STORIES,"* DOESN'T IT?

TOUCHÉ, WITCHER.

WE CERTAINLY HAVE A PROBLEM, A *BIG* ONE AT THAT.

RUMORS OF THE WEREWOLF HAVE STARTED SCARING OFF THE TOURISTS.

FEWER TOURISTS, FEWER *CROWNS.*

FOR NOW, ALL WE LOSE IS MONEY. BUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN A *LIFE* IS LOST?

"HE STARTED TORMENTING GRIMMWALD A FEW MONTHS AGO. FOAMING AT THE MOUTH, INSANITY IN HIS EYES.

AHAHAHA

"HE WAS *HUFFING* AND *PUFFING*, *BLOWING* ANYTHING IN HIS PATH. LOTS OF WHAT WE BUILT FOR THIS SPECIAL LITTLE TOWN."

KILLED ANYBODY?

NO.

BUT IT'S A MATTER OF TIME. ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO HE ATTACKED OUR PIOTER.

THE *LAST* THING WE WANT IS A *LOCAL TRAGEDY.* SO?

500 CROWNS *NOW, 500* WITH *PROOF OF DEATH?*

All his huffing and puffing caught in his throat,

when Geralt White-Hair lopped his head off with one smote...

NO...no... Too dark...

GRIMM GUESTHOUSE

"Now blow"--whispered Geralt, as he raised his huge...

Ehh...A BIT *SENSUAL*...

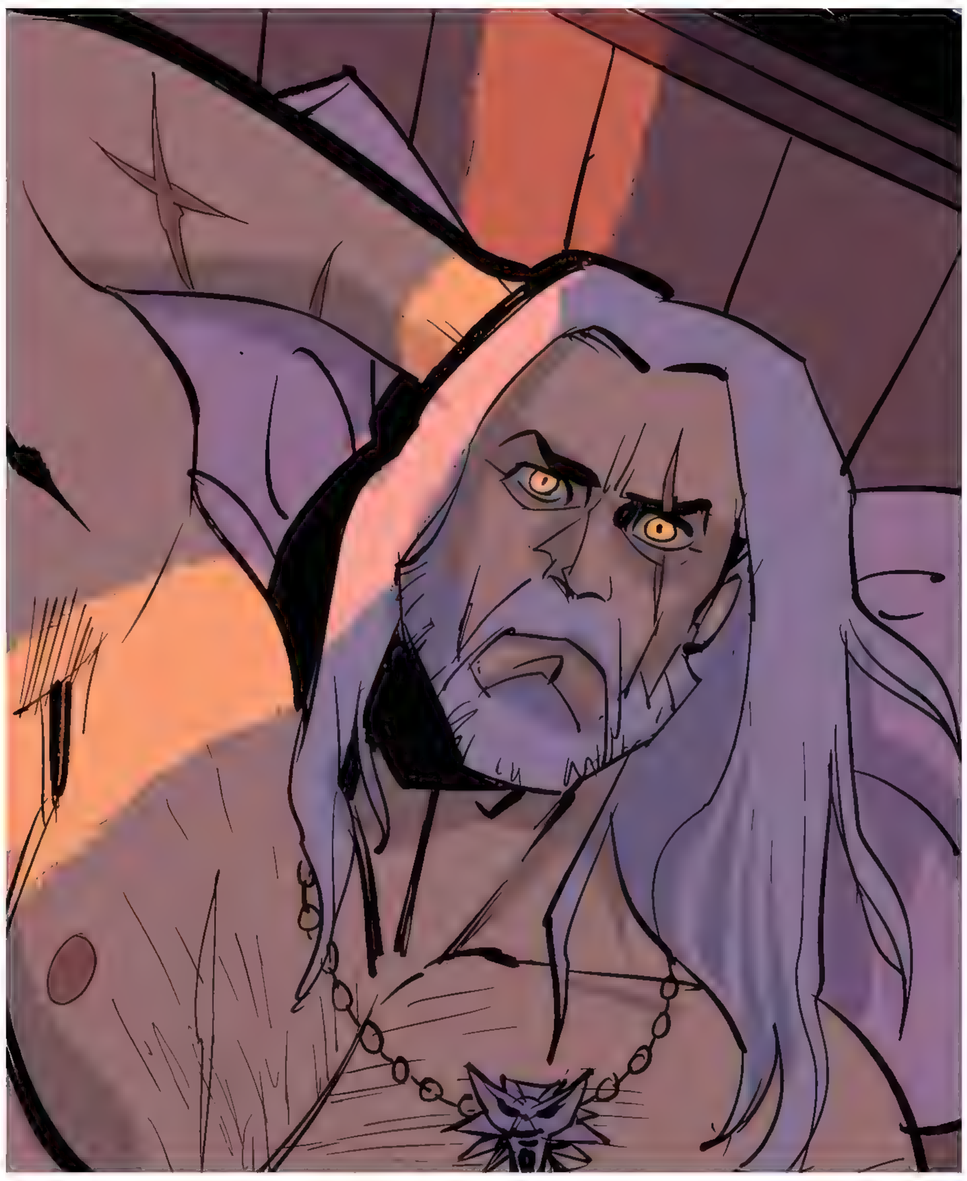
AS YOU CAN SEE, BALLAD WRITING IS A MUCH ***WEIGHTIER*** TASK THAN SLAYING MONSTERS, MY DEAR--

GRIMM GUESTHOUSE

FORGIVE ME, SIRS, FOR THE LONG WAIT. YOUR ROOM IS READY.

I'LL BED YOUR HORSES DOWN IN THE STABLE.
AND I'LL TAKE YE TO YOUR WARM BEDS.
The name's *Kopek*, by the way.
HEY, I REMEMBER YOU!
YOU WERE AT THE SQUARE! YOU WERE ALSO TRYING TO CATCH GERALT'S EYE!
A-AYE... *erm...* TH-THAT'S RIGHT...
...BUT YE PICKED *RED.*
WHAT CAN I SAY, GERALT? 'TIS NO SECRET THAT I AM RULED BY THE *EYE...*
WHY'D YOU WANT MY HELP?
I...*erm...* KNEW THE HOGGE SISTERS HAD ENOUGH OF THAT WEREWOLF, SO--
YOU'RE A *FAN?* THAT'S RARE, IN THIS TOWN.
PLENTY OF FOLKS LIKES 'EM. *EVEN* THE OLD TOWNIES.
THEY REBUILT THIS INN AND KEPT ME ON AS ITS KEEPER.
THEY'VE HELPED *OTHERS,* TOO! PEOPLE WHO LOST THEIR JOBS WHEN THE MINE CLOSED.
I NEED NOTHIN' MORE IN THIS WORLD. SO, *AYE,* I'M A *FAN!*
AND HERE'S YER ROOM! I BID YE GENTLEMEN A *PEACEFUL NIGHT.*


AVALLAC'H






Nay...
...nay...
...naayyy...


Leave me...
...Please...
...begone...


Please...
...nay...
...nay...

CRASH!

I HAD A REALLY BEAUTIFUL DREAM...

...I WAS LYING IN A MOUNTAIN MEADOW, SUN SHINING ABOVE ME, A BOTTLE OF WINE IN MY HAND. *REAL* NICE.

AND *YOU* RUINED IT.

IT'S A SHAME, BECAUSE I *NEVER* HAVE DREAMS LIKE THAT.

WHSH

SHA!

Ugh, I WAS COUNTING ON YOU BEING A *REASONABLE GUY.*

CAN'T WE JUST *TALK THIS OUT?*

TALK IT OUT?!

THINK I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE?!

YOU'RE A **WITCHER! MONSTER SLAYER!** THEY HIRED YOU TO **KILL ME!**

SO THEY CAN STEAL MY TOWN FROM ME!

CHAPTER TWO





COULDA *SLEW* THAT *SHITERAG,* BUT *NO!*

HE LET IT *RUN FREE!*

Hush now, Pioter.

TELL US. WHAT HAPPENED?

CAN'T DENY THAT *I'M* ALSO CURIOUS, 'CAUSE MY DELICIOUS DREAM PREVENTED ME FROM TAKING PART IN THIS WHOLE *HULLABALOO--*

SAME THING AS *ALWAYS!* SHITESTAIN'S BLOWIN' THE *WHOLE FECKIN' HOUSE* TO BITS, BUT HE *STOPS,* DON'T HE, WHEN HE SEES *THE WITCHER.*

THEY STARTS A-*HOLLERIN'* AT EACH OTHER, WEREWOLF EVEN *ATTACKS* OL' SILVER HERE. THEN THE WITCHER *DROPS* HIS *FECKIN' SWORD* AND THE MUTT *FECKS OFF.*

IS THIS *TRUE,* GERALT?

I DON'T RECALL *"HOLLERIN'."* I'VE BEEN WORKING ON MY MANNERS. BUT *SURE,* I LET HIM WALK.

MAY WE ASK *WHY?*

BECAUSE *YOU* FORGOT TO MENTION THAT THIS TOWN IS *HIS.*

LIES!

MY GOOD FELLOW! I KNOW IT SEEMS GERALT MUST BE HARD OF HEARING, AS HE HARDLY APPRECIATES MY *BALLADS,* BUT YOU NEEDN'T SHOUT *SO LOUDLY!*

HE HEARS YOU *JUST FINE.*

SOMEHOW HE *DIDN'T* HEAR THAT HE'S S'POSED TO *CHOP THE MONSTER'S FECKIN' HEAD OFF!* NOT SET HIM *FREE!*

WHY DIDN'T YOU USE *YOUR* CROSSBOW ON HIM, THEN? OR CAN'T YOU DEFEAT A MORE FORMIDABLE FOE THAN AN *INNOCENT DOPPLER?*

I'LL SHOW YE WHO I CAN FACE, YE *MISERABLE WHORESON!* AN' THAT DOPPLER WEREN'T NO BABE IN THE WOODS!

THE DOPPLER WAS A *THIEF,* HE DIDN'T *KILL* ANYONE. AND *NEITHER* DID THE WEREWOLF.

THAT *COCKSUCKER* NEARLY *GUTTED* ME!

ENOUGH!

PRAY TELL, WITCHER, WHY DO YOU *BELIEVE* THIS WEREWOLF, AND NOT *US?*

Oh, MY SISTERS, I BEG YOU-- LET US *END* THIS *CHARADE!*

LET'S BE *HONEST* WITH OUR GUESTS.

THE GRIMM FAMILY BUILT THIS TOWN AND OWNED MUCH OF ITS PROPERTIES.

THE MINE, THE INN, THE STABLES, AND MANY OTHERS-- *INCLUDING* THE BEAUTIFUL HOUSE WE ARE IN AT THIS MOMENT.

"*KARL GRIMM* WAS A MINER, A HARD-WORKING MAN.

"HE STARTED THE COPPER MINE HIMSELF. THERE'S NO DENYING THAT IT WAS A BRILLIANT IDEA.

"AN IDEA THAT BROUGHT HIM *BOATLOADS* OF MONEY. MONEY HE USED TO BUILD *GRIMMWALD.*

"BUT NOT EVERYONE IS TO BE *TRUSTED* WITH A *FORTUNE.*

"MANY BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL BE *RICH FOREVER.*

"SO WHEN THE ORE DRIED UP IN THE MINE, KARL GRIMM REALIZED HE'D *LOST* NEARLY *EVERYTHING.*

"...HE LEFT TWO SONS BEHIND, AND A *MOUNTAIN* OF DEBT.

"HIS *LIFE*, TOO...

"BUT BEFORE HE DIED, HE STARTED *SELLING OFF* HIS ASSETS, TRYING TO KEEP UP THE LAVISH LIFESTYLE HE'D COME TO EXPECT.

"HIS OLDER SON WAS FULL OF *ANGER*. HE SPREAD *LIES* ABOUT US, THAT WE'D BOUGHT THE TOWN FOR PENNIES, JUST TO DESTROY IT.

"*SOME* OF THE TOWNSFOLK *BELIEVED* HIM.

"BELIEVE WHAT YOU WILL, WITCHER, BUT WE *AREN'T* EVIL.

"WE MADE THE BROTHERS AN OFFER. THEY COULD BUY EVERYTHING BACK FOR *EXACTLY* THE SAME PRICE WE'D PAID TO GRIMM SENIOR.

Contract

"THE OLDER ONE, KURT, AGREED. HE *PROMISED* WE'D BE DONE WITH GRIMMWALD AND ON OUR WAY SOON ENOUGH.

"HE TOOK HIS LITTLE BROTHER AND LEFT TOWN TO MAKE SOME MONEY.

"THEY HITCHED THEIR FORTUNES TO A BAND OF *THUGS, MURDERERS,* AND *THIEVES.*

"THAT WAS KURT'S GRAND PLAN: MAKE MONEY BY CAUSING OTHERS *PAIN* AND *SUFFERING.*

"WELL, ONE DAY HE HURT THE *WRONG* PERSON. A *PRIESTESS* WHO *CURSED HIM.*

"*oh,* HE EARNED HIS *'PAYMENT,'* ALL RIGHT..."

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *YOUNGER* BROTHER?

...HE WANTS TO WIN BACK THE TOWN HIS FATHER LOST. AND THAT'S THE *WHOLE STORY...* IT'S STILL WAITING FOR ITS *HAPPY ENDING.*

YOU *KNOW* HIM, WITCHER.

"HE *RETURNED* TO GRIMMWALD. HE WANTED TO BE HERE, MAKE HIS HOME HERE... TO *LIVE.*

"WE GAVE HIM A HOUSE AND A JOB AS THE *INNKEEPER.*

"WE'RE *PLEASED* WITH THE *COLLABORATION.*

"AND *KOPEK GRIMM* IS HAPPY HERE."

ARE YOU? *HAPPY?*

W-wha... Wh-who...

Ahh... IT'S *YOU...*

ARE YOU *REALLY* HAPPY THAT EVERYTHING YOUR FATHER BUILT BELONGS TO SOMEONE *ELSE* NOW? AND THAT YOU *WORK* FOR THAT SOMEONE?

I...*uh...*aye... *AYE,* I'M HAPPY... *VERY* HAPPY!

WHY D'YE ASK?

I WANT TO KNOW THE *TRUTH.*

THE HOGGE SISTERS CLAIM THAT THE WEREWOLF'S YOUR *BROTHER.* THEY SAY HE'S TRYING TO AVENGE YOUR DAD.

ON THE *OTHER* HAND, SOME GRIMMWALDIANS THINK THE SISTERS *HIRED* THE WEREWOLF TO SCARE THEM OUT OF TOWN.

SO THE QUESTION IS... *WHO'S LYING?*

THE TRUTH IS, MY BROTHER WAS GIVEN THE *WEREWOLF'S CURSE* AS PUNISHMENT FOR THE *TERRIBLE, AWFUL* THINGS HE'S DONE!

"HE WAS A *MONSTER* LONG BEFORE THAT POOR GIRL CHANGED HIM!

"HE *DESPISES* THE SISTERS. HE'S DRIVEN BY *RAGE* AND THE *DRINK.* CAPABLE OF *ANYTHING,* HE IS! 'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOME-ONE *DIES* BY HIS HAND. OR *PAW.*"

YOU *ALSO* LIKE YOUR DRINK, *eh?* I SAW YOU LAST NIGHT...

'S ALL 'CAUSE OF *HIM!*

HATE HIM THAT MUCH, DO YOU?

BUT WOULDN'T THE SISTERS' DEATH BE MORE... *USEFUL...* TO YOU, BY ANY CHANCE?

MY DA AND KURT WERE LIKE PEAS IN A POD. THEY ALWAYS WANTED MORE AND MORE, EVEN WHEN THEY COULDN'T HANDLE IT THEMSELVES.

AND I... I DON'T *NEED* RICHES. DON'T NEED MUCH OF *ANYTHING.* I *LIKE* HARD WORK.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, GERALT?

BECAUSE *I* THINK...

PLINK

PLUNK

Brother and brother will always walk hand in hand.

Arm in arm, against their pa's tormentor they stand.

THE BROTHERS *AREN'T* WORKING TOGETHER. THAT TRAIL'S A DEAD END.

Oh?

HOW ABOUT...

PLINK

PLINK

No matter how much you loved your dear old dad...

It's the pretty penny that makes you truly glad.

NO, *THAT'S* NOT IT EITHER... KURT WOULDN'T MAKE A DEAL WITH THE SISTERS.

FINE. SO WHAT'S YOUR TAKE?

THE HOGGES AND KOPEK DISLIKE KURT, THAT'S FOR SURE. AND KURT HAS NO LOVE FOR THE SISTERS, EITHER. BUT HE'S JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHER DRUNKS...

...SINGS A LITTLE, YELLS A LITTLE. KNOCKS OVER A TABLE HERE AND THERE. BUT HE DOESN'T *HURT* ANYBODY.

GERALT, YOU *KNOW* I'M NOT A *RIDDLER!* WHAT DOES IT ALL *MEAN?* FOR *US?* FOR THE *STORY?*

BEG YOUR PARDON?!

BUT WE PROMISED YOU A *HANDSOME REWARD!*

Hahaha! TOLD YIZ, DIDN'T I, THAT THE HAIRBALL SLAYER'D TURN ON YE!

It certainly *was* handsome...

WHATEVER IT IS BETWEEN YOU AND KURT GRIMM IS *YOUR* BUSINESS.

SURE, MAYBE HE'LL HAUNT THE TOWN, WREAK SOME HAVOC, PISS ON YOUR DOOR-STEP.

BUT HE *WON'T* KILL ANYONE, SO I WON'T BE KILLING *HIM.*

MY SISTERS AND I ARE *DISAPPOINTED,* OF COURSE, BUT ONE THING BRINGS ME COMFORT.

THAT YOU *DON'T* BELIEVE WE HIRED THE WEREWOLF TO TERRORIZE THE TOWN.

I'VE HEARD YOU WITCHERS DON'T HAVE EMOTIONS. BUT I'M *CERTAIN* YOU'LL FEEL SOMETHING WHEN YOU REALIZE YOU WERE WRONG. *FAREWELL!*

YOU *REALLY* WANT TO LEAVE?

YEP.

Poor Red, she'll be inconsolable...

SHALL WE TELL HER A LITTLE WHITE LIE? SO SHE UNDERSTANDS WHY WE'RE LEAVING?

WE'RE LEAVING *BECAUSE* THE WEREWOLF DOESN'T WANT TO KILL HER GRAN.

YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO GIVE THE PEOPLE A DROP OF SUNSHINE, *eh?*

I'D HAVE TOLD HER THE MOST WONDERFUL TALE, OF A GIRL WHO WAS HAPPY AND SAFE.

AND THE *OTHER* FOLK? PEOPLE INTERESTED IN YOU AND YOUR SPECIALTY, POTENTIAL CLIENTS... I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT WE'VE LOST A HEAP OF COIN BECAUSE OF YOU!

"WE COULD TELL RED THAT YOU WANTED TO FORCE THE HOGGE SISTERS TO LEAVE THE TOWNSPEOPLE ALONE.

"BUT OF COURSE THEY *REFUSED.*"

TRUST ME, PEOPLE *LOVE* A *FEUD.*

"SO THE NASTY SISTERS SICCED A WEREWOLF ON YOU.

"IT SURE *ROUGHED YOU UP GOOD!*

"Ooh, HE REALLY *TORE YOU TO SHREDS!*"

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, GERALT, BUT DON'T WORRY.

PEOPLE LOVE A HERO WHO LOSES, NEARLY DIES, THEN *ARISES FROM THE ASHES!*

"SO YOU PICK YOURSELF UP AND TILT THE SCALES OF VICTORY TO THE WHITE-HAIRED HERO.

THWACK!

"WITH A ***THUNDEROUS PUNCH*** YOU KNOCK THE BEAST TO THE GROUND.

"THE HOGGES HAVE NO CHOICE.

"THEY PROMISE THAT THE GOOD PEOPLE OF GRIMMWALD WILL BE SAFE FROM THIS DAY FORTH."

I'LL TELL RED THAT THE WEREWOLF'S A COMMON DRUNKARD AND WON'T HURT A SOUL. AND THAT THE HOGGE SISTERS AREN'T SICCING HIM ON HER GRAN.

Ugh, SHE ***WON'T*** LIKE THAT... SHE'LL BE ***PISSED,*** GERALT, I'M TELLING YOU. THIS IS A TERRI--

AHA!

WHAT HAPPENED?

The were... ***WEREWOLF*** ATTACKED ME!

Hmm... LOOKS LIKE A WILD ANIMAL ***GORED*** YOU.

IT WAS A ***WEREWOLF!*** ARE YOU ***DEAF?!*** OR ARE YOU SAYING MY GRANDDAUGHTER IS ***LYING?!***

DAMN RIGHT, SHE AIN'T LYIN'!

THAT *BEAST* GOTTA BE *PUT DOWN!*

WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

MIGHT ASK YIZ THE SAME QUESTION.

I HEARD RED *SCREAM.*

IF YE'D *KILLED* THE SHITERAG, YE WOULDN'T *HEAR* NO *GODDAMN SCREAM!* NOW *PISS OFF,* BE ON YER WAY, WITCHER! DEAL WITH THE MONSTER MESELF!

WHAT? YOU WERE *LEAVING?*

I WAS CERTAIN HE WOULDN'T HURT ANYONE.

WELL, YOU WERE *WRONG...*

TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED! TELL HIM *WHO THE MONSTER IS!*

JUST LIKE EVERY NIGHT, I TAKE SOME PROVISIONS OVER TO GRAN'S PLACE.

"HE ATTACKED ME OUT OF NOWHERE!"

PLEASE! DON'T KILL ME!

I'LL SPARE YOU IF YOU AND THE OLD LADY LEAVE GRIMMWALD TONIGHT AND SIGN OVER THE HOUSE TO THE HOGGES!

YEEAOOOW!

LET THIS BE A WARNING TO YOU!

LIAR! DIRTY, ROTTEN LIAR!

I'M *NOT* LYING! I KNOW WHAT I SAW, AND I KNOW THE *PAIN* OF *WEREWOLF'S CLAWS!*

YOU'VE GOT *BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS* AND YOU *KNOW IT!*

THE *OLD ONE'S* POISONIN' HER MIND! SHE *TOLD 'ER* TO SAY THAT!

AND *YE* TRUSTS HER, WITCHER?!

I TRUST ONLY MYSELF. When I'm *sober,* at least.

SO GET IT INTO YOUR *THICK SKULL* THAT IT'S THE *SISTERS* YOU SHOULD BE ON YOUR WAY TO *KILL!*

IF'N YE GETS A *GNOME'S DICK CLOSER* TO THEIR HOUSE, YE *MAGGOT-EATIN' RAT KILLER,* YE'LL FEEL A *CROSSBOW BOLT* SPLIT YER *SKULL IN TWO!*

BEST THINK *LONG AN' HARD* ABOUT WHOSE *STORY* YE BELIEVE!

I'm telling the truth...

I DIDN'T SAY YOU *WEREN'T.*

SO WHAT'RE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH THE BEAST AND THE SISTERS?

JUST *YESTERDAY* YOU WERE *DEFENDING* THE WERE-WOLF...

JUST YESTERDAY HE HADN'T *ATTACKED* MY *BELOVED* GRAND-DAUGHTER!

I'LL STAY IN GRIMMWALD. WAIT FOR THE WEREWOLF AND HAVE A *CHAT* WITH HIM.

HAVE A CHAT?! YOU SHOULD *KILL HIM,* AND THEN GO *BUTCHER* THE HOGGES FOR BACON. AND THEIR DISGUSTING HENCHMAN, TOO!

...

I'LL WALK YOU LADIES HOME.

I'VE ALREADY *TOLD* YOU WHAT KIND OF *HELP* WE NEED.

TILL THEN, WE'LL FEND FOR OURSELVES.

When the hero has doubts, the handsome bard comes to his aid.

His ballad is a sign that the blood debts have yet to be paid.

The chorus is energy, the verse--strength and might.

SO THE HERO--

COULD THE HANDSOME BARD *SHUT UP* FOR A MOMENT?

TOO *EPIC,* YOU RECKON?

I'M NOT *FIGHTING* ANYONE UNTIL I WEASEL OUT THE *TRUTH.*

IT'S *ABSOLUTELY* *UNFATHOMABLE!*

WHOM TO *BELIEVE?!* RED, THE GRANNY, KOPEK, OR THE SISTERS?

NOBODY, DANDELION, *NOBODY.*

EVERY-BODY'S LYING, BECAUSE EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING TO GAIN HERE.

OKAY, LET'S TRUST THE *SWEETEST* OF THE BUNCH! *RED!*

BESIDES, THE WEREWOLF *ATTACKED* HER! SHE HAD *PROOF!*

YES, MAYBE I WAS WRONG, MAYBE HE REALLY *DID* ATTACK HER... BUT WOULD HE CORROBORATE HER STORY?

I'VE GOT *NO CLUE,* GERALT. I'M BUT *ONE* MAN TRYING TO UNTANGLE A *WEB OF LIES!*

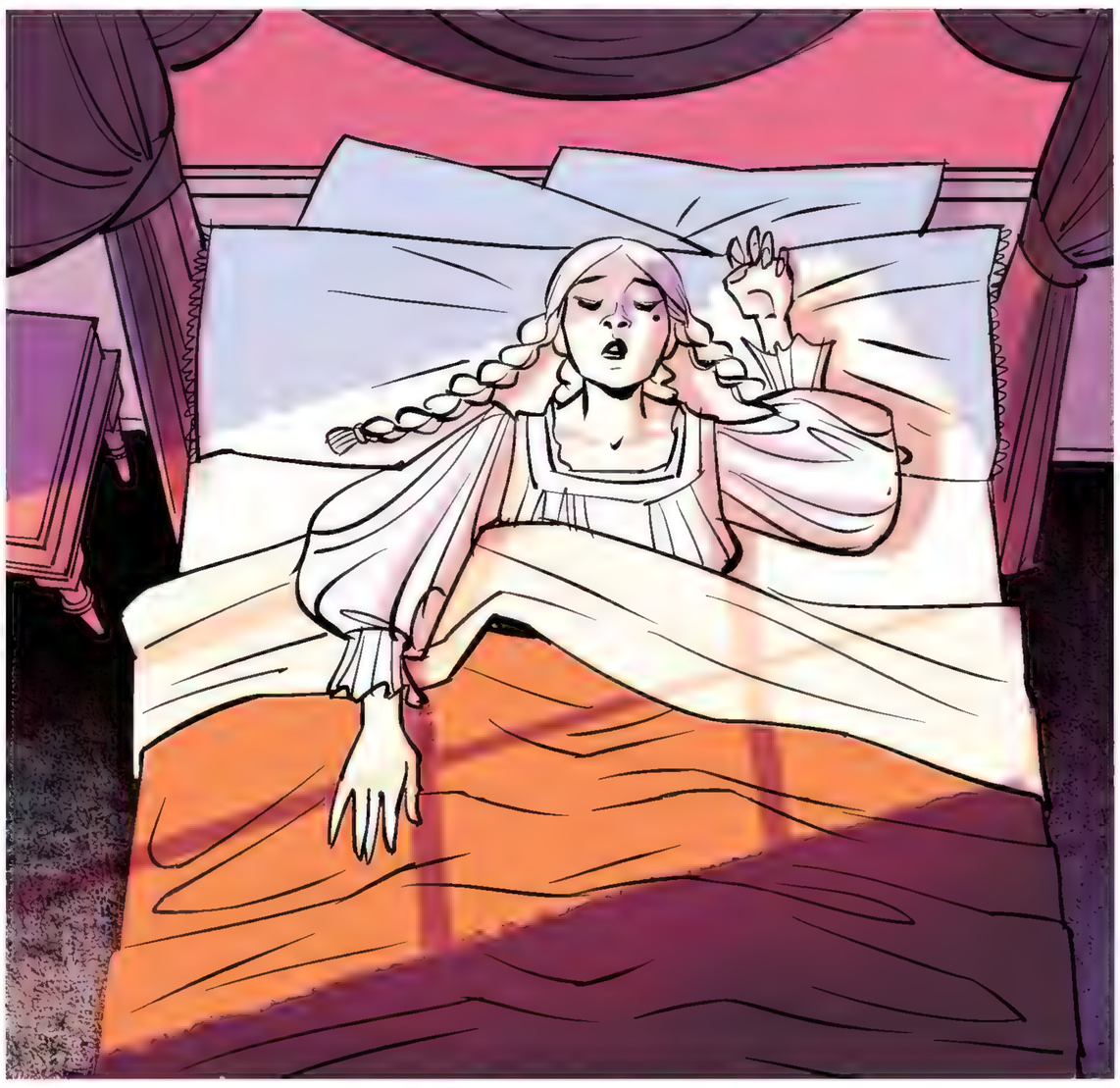
MY *HEART* TELLS ME ONE THING, MY *MIND* SOME-THING ELSE ENTIRELY.

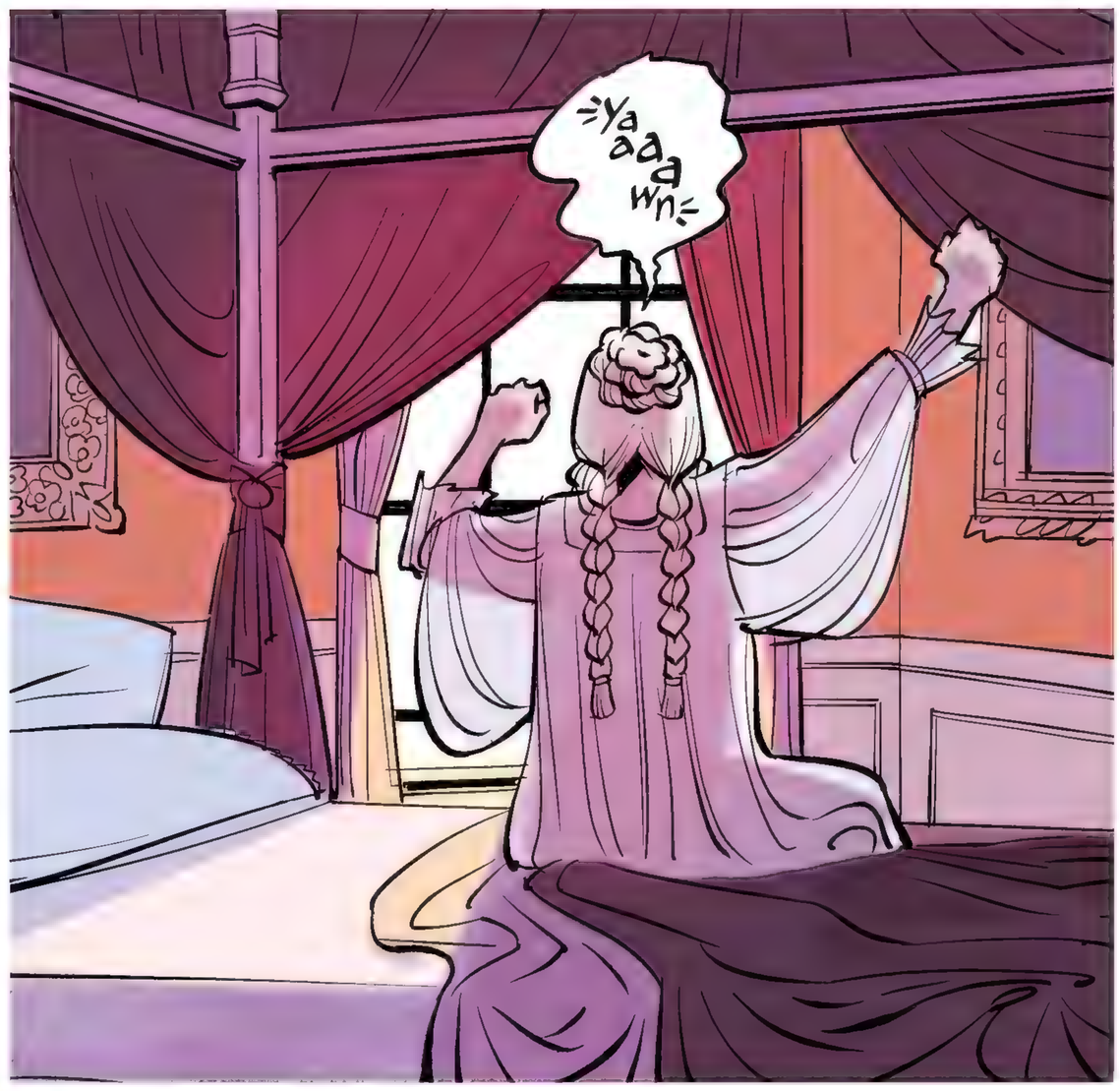
GOOD THING YOU'RE A *RUTHLESS, COLD-BLOODED MUTANT.* HELPS YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE.

THERE ARE NO *RIGHT* CHOICES, DANDELION-- ONLY CHOICES THAT *HURT LESS.*

BUT THIS ONE WILL PLEASE YOU. WE'RE STAYING. I GET THE FEELING THAT THIS STORY *STILL* HAS SOME *TWISTS AND TURNS* IN IT YET.


FOS




=yaaaawn=


GOOD MORNING, BROOKE. DID YOU SLEEP WELL?
Oh, I'VE BEEN BETTER, MY DEAR LESLIE.


LEA, BREAKFAST TIME!
NOK NOK


Lea?!

NO OOOO!

AAAAHH!

CHAPTER THREE



NOW DO YOU BELIEVE US, WITCHER?

OI! MISS HOGGE ASKED YE A QUESTION!

SHE'S *HOLDING* SOMETHING.

SEEMS LIKE SHE GRABBED IT RIGHT BEFORE SHE DIED.

LOOKS LIKE A *PIECE OF PAPE--*

DON'T YE DARE LAY A FILTHY *FUCKIN'* ***FINGER*** ON MISS HOGGE!

WHAT IS IT?

LOOKS LIKE A ***LABEL.***

IT'S A BIT TORN, I CAN'T MAKE OUT THE FIRST WORD... BUT LOOK, HERE IT SAYS, ***"MEADOW"...***

LET ME SEE, MISS...

Hmm...

"CRANE MEADOW."

WITCH'S HUT. FAMOUS FER HER ELIXIRS.

BET SHE KNOWS A THING'R TWO ABOUT THE BEAST.

I'M OFF!

I'LL RIDE WITH YOU.

NO THE *FUCK* YE *WON'T!*

GONNA HAVE ANOTHER *FRIENDLY CHAT,* ARE YE? LOOK AT WHAT YER BABBLIN' BROUGHT US...

THIS TIME THERE WON'T BE ANY *TALKING.*

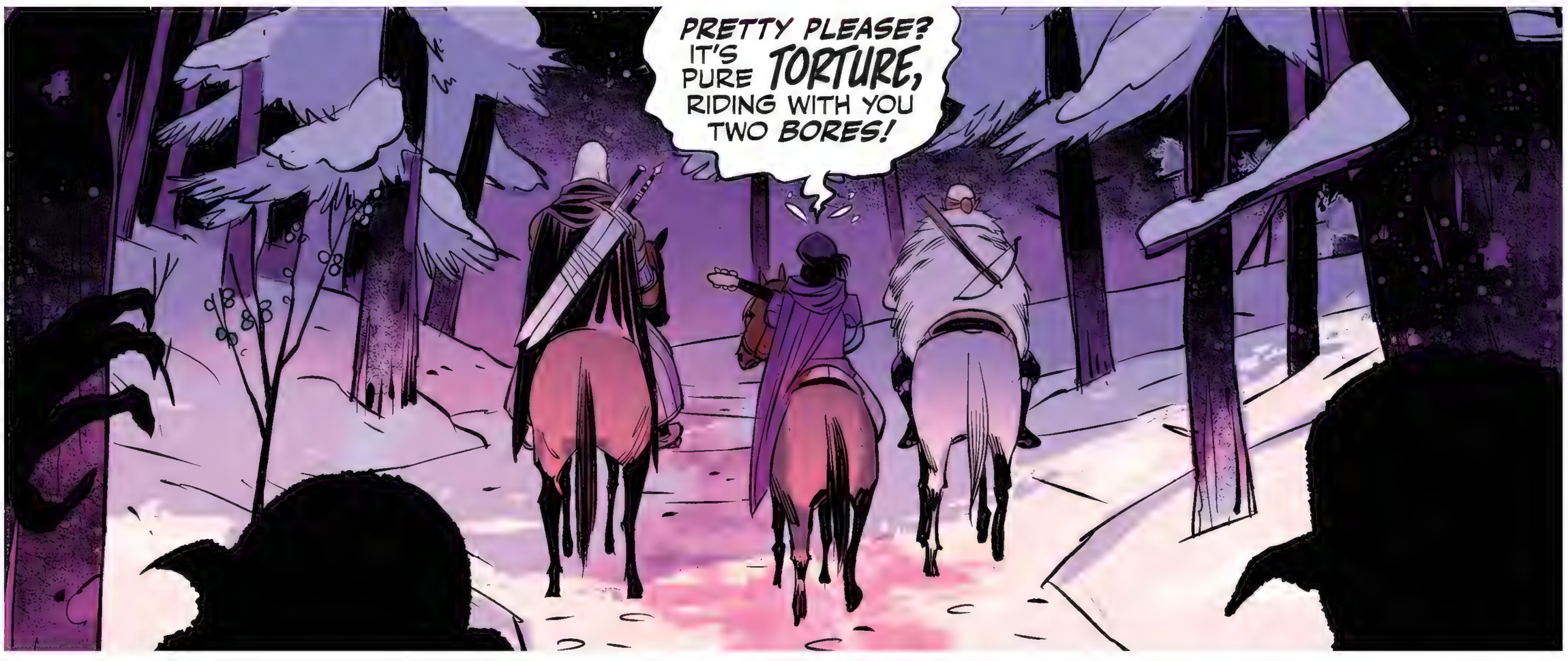
I'LL *KILL* HIM.






SO...


...HOW 'BOUT A BALLAD? A LIVELY TUNE FOR A PLEASANT JOURNEY?


PRETTY PLEASE? IT'S PURE TORTURE, RIDING WITH YOU TWO BORES!

FUCK BALLADS. AN' FUCK *FAIRY TALES.* AN' FUCK ALL THAT OTHER *MAKE-BELIEVE SHIT.*

BUT SURE, SING ALL YE LIKE. *ooh,* HOW 'BOUT THE ONE ABOUT THE WITCHER THAT WAS A-CHATTIN' WHEN HE SHOULDA BEEN A-*FLAYIN'?*

IF YOU'D *"CHATTED"* INSTEAD OF WAVING THAT CROSSBOW AROUND, MAYBE YOU WOULDN'T HAVE THE *BLOOD OF AN INNOCENT DOPPLER* ON YOUR HANDS.

AN' IF YOU'DA SHUT THAT YAPPIN' TRAP OF YERS, USED THAT RUSTY SWORD, MISS HOGGE'D BE SIPPIN' HER MORNIN' TEA RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

THAT SONUVA BITCH DOPPLER WAS A NASTY THIEF, OR WORSE!

BUT AYE, CALL ME A MURDERER FOR SPLITTIN' A ROBBER IN TWO. HEY, BETTER SAFE'N SORRY, I SAYS.

'CAUSE YER MR. JUSTICE, *eh?*

SO TELL ME, WITCHER, HOW MANY'RE LYIN' DEAD ON THAT PATH TO JUSTI...

...!!!HH--

HOLY SHIT!

RAAAHH!!

CHOKE ON THIS...

...YE BLEEDIN' BASTARD!

SEE, SCARFACE? *THIS* IS HOW YE SLAY MONSTERS!

Shhh!

NEKKERS ALWAYS ATTACK IN *GROUPS*...

EARGHHHH

SSHH

SLASH

THUNK

DON'T THANK ME.

What the *fu--*

RAAAHH!

GRAH!

Shittt...

oh, no...

GERALT!

GERALT?!

RAAAH!

DAMMIT!

MMMM

HAH!

What now? What do I...

HA!

Forgive me, my darling!

PAF!

THWACK

Uuuuhnnh!

SPLAT!

I'LL GIVE IT TO YE, SILVERHAIR, IF YE WANTS, YE CAN SURE SWING THAT KILLIN' STICK.

IT'S A *SIGN!*

NOT A SCRATCH ON HER! MY BELOVED!

SO, BOYS? MAYBE A LIGHT BALLAD? THE THREE BRAVE GENTLEMEN WHO FOUGHT A DOZEN NEKKERS IN A *DRAMATIC BATTLE TO THE DEA--*

NO!

CAW!

THE FOREST WON'T HIDE YOU...

WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE.

WE CAME TO TALK.

Oh, **SURE,** I FORGOT THAT YOU WITCHERS ARE FAMED FOR YOUR *SCINTILLATING CONVERSATION.*

GIVE ME AN HOUR AND A COUPLE BOTTLES OF WINE, I'LL BE QUITE THE TALKER.

HAHA! I'LL CONSIDER YOUR PROPOSAL.

SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT?

YER CUSTOMER KURT GRIMM, THE WERE-WOLF, IS A *FUCKIN' MURDERER!*

HE KILLED SOMEONE IN GRIMMWALD. HIS VICTIM HAD A LABEL FROM ONE OF ***YOUR*** ELIXIRS IN HER HAND.

MY MEDICINES ARE POPULAR. ***ANYONE*** CAN GET THEIR HANDS ON ONE. AND THEY'RE POPULAR BECAUSE MY PATIENTS KNOW I'LL TAKE THEIR SECRETS TO THE GRAVE.

I UNDERSTAND. YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO'VE PLACED THEIR TRUST IN YOU.

BUT IF KURT GRIMM REALLY ***IS*** A MURDERER AND ONE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS, THAT CAN'T BE GOOD FOR BUSINESS.

WAIT UNTIL EVENING. MAYBE YOU'LL GET THE ANSWERS YOU'VE COME FOR.

JUST ***ONE*** RULE: NOT ONE DROP OF BLOOD MAY BE SPILLED IN THIS PLACE!

There is but one sun, only one day.

My faithful shadow never leads me astray.

There is but one moon, only one night.

Hey now, traveler, where is your might?

MAY I JOIN YOU?

SO, WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT AN HOUR AND A COUPLE BOTTLES OF WINE?

I THOUGHT YOU PEDDLE *ELIXIRS.* THAT ISN'T *MAGIC* WINE, IS IT?

AYE, IT'S MAGIC ALL RIGHT. DRINK HALF THE BOTTLE AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.

AND I DON'T *"PEDDLE ELIXIRS."* I PREFER TO CALL MYSELF A *HEALER...*

PLOP!

SOME ARE HEALED WITH ELIXIRS, OTHERS WITH WINE.

Blanc Meadow

AND WHAT *HELPS* KURT GRIMM?

BOTH, ACTUALLY.

ELIXIRS HELP HIM STAY HUMAN. WINE... WINE HELPS HIM FORGET HOW HARD THAT IS.

DO YOU THINK HE IS CAPABLE OF *KILLING* SOMEONE?

POP!

WHO WOULDN'T BE? WITH A GOOD-ENOUGH REASON?

YOU AREN'T MUCH OF AN *OPTIMIST,* ARE YOU?

MAYBE *I* NEED HEALING TOO, WITCHER.

WHO DOESN'T?

CLINK!

He he he he...

HE ALWAYS SAYS I'M A FOOL FOR FOLLOWING MY HEART. AND THAT I'M A *TERRIBLE* WOMANIZER.

JUST LOOK AT HIM...

TALKING... DRINKING WINE... *Giggling...*

TELL ME, WHO'S THE WOMANIZER HERE? *Huh?*

IT'S A HEAVY BURDEN, YOU KNOW THAT? BEING A HOPELESS ROMANTIC...

SOMETIMES I THINK IT'S A CURSE. TO NEVER FIND THE ONE... THE ONE YOU'LL LOVE UNTIL YOUR LAST BREATH.

Pfft... ANYWAY, YOU GOT A LADY BACK IN GRIMMWALD?

*Ha...*NAH, I PREFER MEN.

AND NOPE. GOT NO TIME FOR NOBODY.

*Oh...*I ADMIRE YOUR COURAGE.

SURELY CAN'T BE EASY IN TIMES LIKE THESE?

EASIER'N BEIN' AN *ELF.*

I'LL WRITE A BALLAD IN YOUR HONOR!

NO.

THE LYRICS ARE *BURSTING FROM MY LIPS!*

A MONSTROUS WOLF IN THE WOODS... YOU FACE HIM ALONE...

YOU *WIN!* LOCK HIM IN A HUGE CAGE AND DRAG HIM INTO TOWN.

I'LL CALL IT... *"Pieter and the Wolf."*

HAD A FRIEND ONCE...

...GOOD LAD, RAN AN INN. THE PEOPLE LOVED HIM AN' HIS FOOD.

FED ANYONE AN' EVERYONE, EVEN IF THEY CAME ROUND WITH EMPTY POCKETS.

BUT ONE DAY, IT ALL CAME CRASHIN' DOWN ON HIS DUMB ASS. WASN'T PAYIN' ATTENTION AN' THREW A POISONOUS MUSHROOM INTO THE STEW.

A KID DIED, AN' THE STORIES STARTED FLYIN'. 'BOUT A COOK WHO HAD IT OUT FOR BABIES.

I *SHIT* ON YER *BALLADS, STORIES,* AN' ANY OTHER *MADE-UP SHIT.*

IT'S ALL LIES!

HE CAME...

MISSED ME THAT BAD, *eh?*

JUST WANTED TO SEE YOU WITHOUT ALL THAT ***HAIR.***

OR MAYBE THE HOGGE SISTERS ***RAISED*** THE ***REWARD MONEY?***

KEEP THAT NAME OUT O' YER FUCKIN' MOUTH!

Ah, I WAS RIGHT, SEEMS THEY'VE RAISED IT...

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT, KURT!

DON'T DO ANYTHING *STUPID*, PIOTER. DON'T YOU SEE THAT SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE? NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE!

WE NEED TO *TALK* TO HIM.

I *KNEW* IT, I KNEW IT! YER A *SONUVA BITCH* AN' A GODDAMN *LIAR!*

WHAT DON'T MAKE SENSE, *huh?* THAT HE'S A *WINO* WHO GETS HIS *PAWS* ON EVERYTHIN'?

ENOUGH WITH THE FUCKIN' TALKIN'!

GIVE ME A MINUTE. *ONE MINUTE!*

HE'S A FUCKIN' MURDERER! KILL HIM!

What?!

WHAT'S HE ON ABOUT?!

ONE OF THE SISTERS WAS KILLED. THERE WERE BITES AND GASHES ALL OVER HER BODY...

AND RED WAS ATTACKED--

HE FUCKIN' *KNOWS* THAT! *MURDERER!*

IT WASN'T *ME!*

LIAR!

WHO DID IT THEN?

HIS OWN BROTHER'S GOIN' AROUND TELLIN' EVERYONE THAT HE'S A MONSTER AN' A KILLER!

MY *BROTHER*... THOSE MONEY-GRUBBING SISTERS MADE MY BROTHER DESPISE ME.

REMIND ME TO *THANK* WHOEVER KILLED ONE OF THEM.

SON OF A WHORE!

OOF!

NO!

I SAID...

NOT ONE DROP...

AAAHHH HH

...OF BLOOD!

AND I PROMISED THAT NO BLOOD WOULD BE SPILLED. *Take it easy.*

YOU *LIED* TO ME!

LET ME TALK TO HIM.

I'VE TOLD YOU EVERY-THING.

AAARGHHHH

KAA

I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY YOU WERE CURSED?

AND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BROTHER?

KAAAAA

MY BROTHER IS INNOCENT! I KILLED RED AND THAT BITCH!

I TOLD YOU...

=ackkh=

...THAT RED WAS ATTACKED, *NOT* KILLED...

I'LL SNAP YOUR SPINE LIKE A TWIG.

HURRY UP THEN, BEFORE I SPILL YOUR GUTS.

TELL HIM THE *TRUTH*, KURT!

OR *I* WILL...

CHAPTER FOUR





WHEN PA DIED, I HAD TO TAKE CARE OF KOPEK.

AND DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO TAKE BACK WHAT WAS STOLEN FROM US!

YOUR FATHER *SOLD* EVERY-THING TO THE HOGGE SISTERS. HOW IS THAT *STEALING?*

WHEN THEY LOANED PA THE MONEY FOR THE MINE, THEY KNEW THERE WAS ONLY TEN YEARS OF COPPER DOWN THERE. THEY KNEW HE'D NEVER BE ABLE TO PAY OFF HIS DEBTS.

AND HE'D SELL EVERYTHING BACK TO THEM FOR PENNIES!

YE LYIN' HORSE'S PIZZLE!

CALM DOWN!

THEY GAVES YE A CHANCE! *UNGRATEFUL WHORESON,* YE GOT A GOLDEN DEAL!

AYE...WE COULD'VE BOUGHT IT ALL BACK FOR THE SAME AMOUNT THEY PAID TO PA. BUT... THEY ONLY GAVE US SIX MONTHS! THEIR GENEROSITY IS HUMBLING.

AND THAT'S WHY EVERYTHING WENT TO SHIT...

ONLY ONE WAY TO MAKE THAT KINDA MONEY IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.

"LUCKILY, FOLKS LOOKING FOR THAT TYPE OF WORK'RE SOON DROWNING IN JOB OFFERS.

"AYE, WE STOLE, BURNED VILLAGES, KILLED...

"CAN'T SAY I'M PROUD OF WHAT WE DID.

"BUT STILL, I'M GLAD I KEPT KOPEK FAR AWAY FROM ALL THAT.

"AS FAR AS POSSIBLE FROM ANYTHING HE MIGHT REGRET LATER."

WELL *HOO-FUCKIN'-RAY.* WORKED OUT GREAT-- NOW YER BROTHER HATES YER GUTS.

TO BE FAIR, I DIDN'T FEEL WARM RAYS OF BROTHERLY LOVE EMANATING FROM KOPEK EITHER.

I HOPED THAT IF HE COMMITTED NO EVIL, EVIL WOULDN'T FIND HIM EITHER.

TAKE A WALK, KID, I'LL BE BACK SOON.

"HOW WRONG I WAS...

"WE LOOTED A TEMPLE NEAR MIRT... YOUNG PRIESTESS GOT CAUGHT INSIDE... WE WERE DRUNK AND... DID TERRIBLE THINGS...

"SHE SCREAMED SOMETHING IN OUR FACES. 'BOUT HOW WE WERE MONSTERS, SO MONSTERS WE SHALL BECOME.

"THEN SHE PULLED A DAGGER OUT OF HER ROBES AND... STABBED HERSELF IN THE NECK..."

I'VE HEARD THIS STORY BEFORE...

...SHE *CURSED* YOU.

"IT STARTED ALL OF A SUDDEN ONE MORNING A FEW DAYS LATER.

"EACH OF US BECAME A BEAST OF SOME KIND.

"A PIG... A BOAR...

"...I BECAME THIS WOLF...

"...AND MY POOR BROTHER A DOG..."

HE WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH ME...

...PROMISED MYSELF I WOULDN'T REST 'TIL I'D DONE SOMETHING ABOUT OUR PREDICAMENT. AFTER MONTHS OF SEARCHING, I FOUND THIS PLACE.

THE POTIONS *TAMED* THE CURSE, BUT NOT HIM... I WAS A MONSTER AND DESERVE TO STAY A *MONSTER!* BUT HE... HE WAS INNOCENT...

SO HE WENT *BACK TO GRIMMWALD!*

A TOWN CARRYING *HIS NAME!*

HE STRUCK A DEAL WITH THOSE BITCHES! AGREED TO BE THEIR SERVANT, IN A TOWN THAT *BELONGS TO HIM!*

THIS SHIT-STIRRIN' DONKEY'S EVILER'N THE *DEVIL!*

GIMME THE CROSS-BOW, LET'S END THIS HERE AN' NOW!

YER OWN BROTHER WOULDN'T SHED A TEAR.

YOU HERE TO CHEER YOURSELF UP? OR FIND A MURDERER?

I WANT TO LOOK THE DOG IN THE EYE AS I PUT HIM DOWN!

JUST WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW. AND YOU'LL FIND OUT WHO KILLED MISS HOGGE.

Yer safe now, me love. No one's gonna lay his ***nasty, slimy fingers*** on ye no more.

YOUR HAPPINESS DELIGHTS ME, BUT NOT EVERY-ONE'S BASKING IN RAYS OF SUNSHINY JOY.

WHY DO I GOTTA RIDE WITH ***HIM?!***

I DON'T DOUBT THAT HE'S A MOST CIVILIZED COMPANION, BUT WHAT IF HE REALLY ***IS*** A MURDERER AND HE GETS ***BLOOD RAGE MIDRIDE?***

LET HIM RAGE! IF'N HE SO MUCH AS ***TWITCHES*** I'LL TURN HIM INTO A ***FECKIN' PORCUPINE!***

Really think you could tear me into pieces?

I WON'T HURT YOU. ***TRUST ME.***

Oh, ***sure...***
Trust you...
Mmhmm...
How reassuring...

ONE SEC.

TWO BOTTLES OF WINE AND AN HOUR ALWAYS END THIS WAY WITH YOU?

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.

I TRUSTED YOU. I SENSED THAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR JUSTICE.

NO SUCH THING *AS* JUSTICE. IT'S JUST A FANCY WORD FOR ***REVENGE.***

SO, NO HAPPY ENDING?

THOSE ONLY EXIST IN FAIRY TALES AND BALLADS.

AND ***HERE.*** HERE YOU COULD ALSO FIND A HAPPY ENDING.

I WOULDN'T EXACTLY CALL RUNNING AWAY A HAPPY ENDING.

NO ELIXIR UNDER THE SUN WILL CURE WHAT AILS YOU, WITCHER.

BUT IF YOU'RE EVER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, MY ***WINE CELLAR*** IS ***FULL.***

WELL?!

WHICH FECKIN' GOAT'S PIZZLE WE'S WAITIN' FOR ANYWAY?!

I SEES WHAT'S UNDER THAT GRAY DOME O' YERS. IF'N IT AIN'T THE WOLF, THEN HIS DUMB FECKIN' BROTHER SPILLED ALL THAT BLOOD! LET'S PUT HIM DOWN TOO!

TOUCH HIM, AND I'LL RIP OUT YOUR GUTS AND FEED THEM BACK TO YOU, STOMACH FIRST!

NO ONE IS PUTTING ANYONE DOWN! AND NO FEEDING ANYONE'S GUTS TO ANYONE ELSE!

IF IT *WAS* KOPEK, THEN WHY DID HE ATTACK RED? SOMETHING STILL DOESN'T ADD UP...

JUST A THOUGHT... BUT...And no offense, right?... BUT MAYBE KOPEK...

GRRRR

AGAIN, JUST A THOUGHT... So don't start getting thoughts about *disembowelment* or whatever, but...

MAYBE KOPEK *FOOLED US ALL?!*

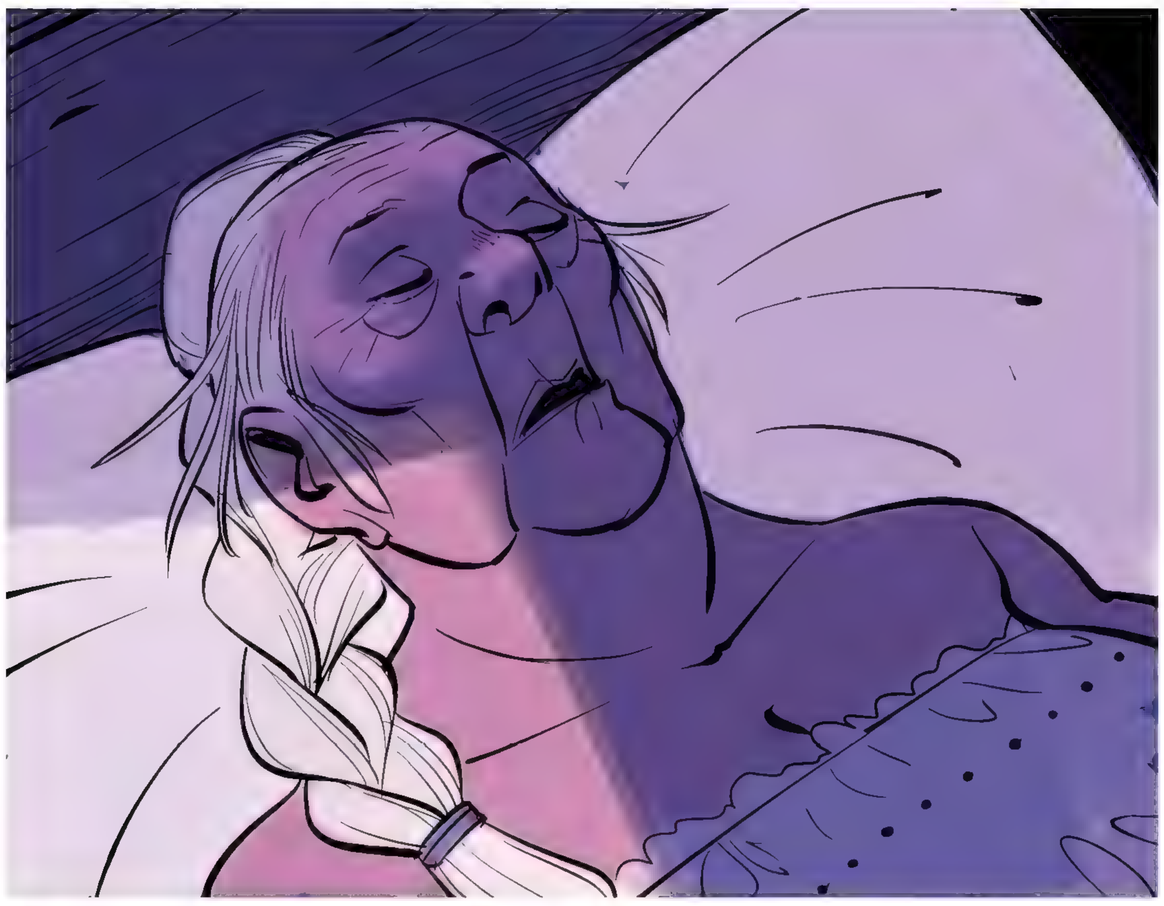
PLAYING THE INNOCENT, WHILE THIS WHOLE TIME HE REALLY JUST WANTED TO KILL OFF HIS COMPETITION, TAKE GRIMMWALD FOR HIMSELF?! THAT'S WHY HE WENT FOR RED!

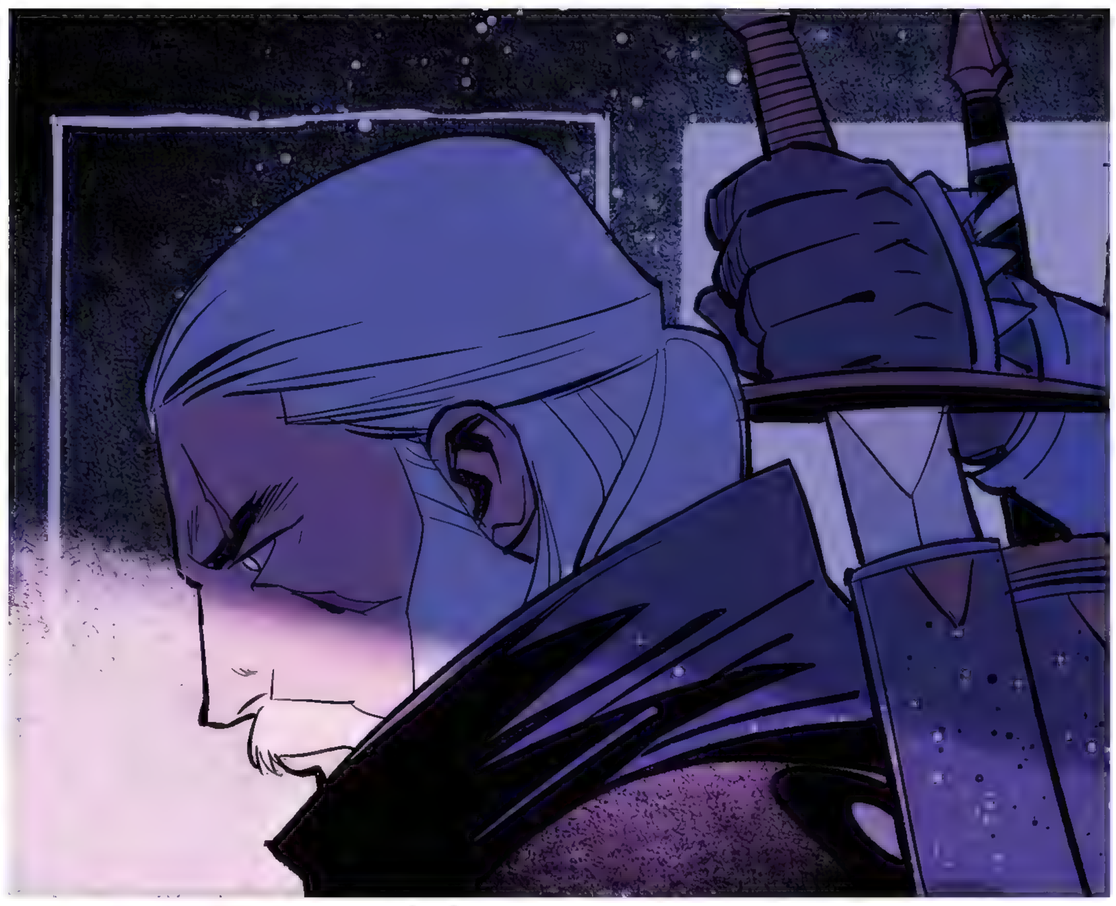
RED SAW A WEREWOLF, NOT A DOG, SHE'D NEVER MIX THE TWO UP... *HOLD ON!*

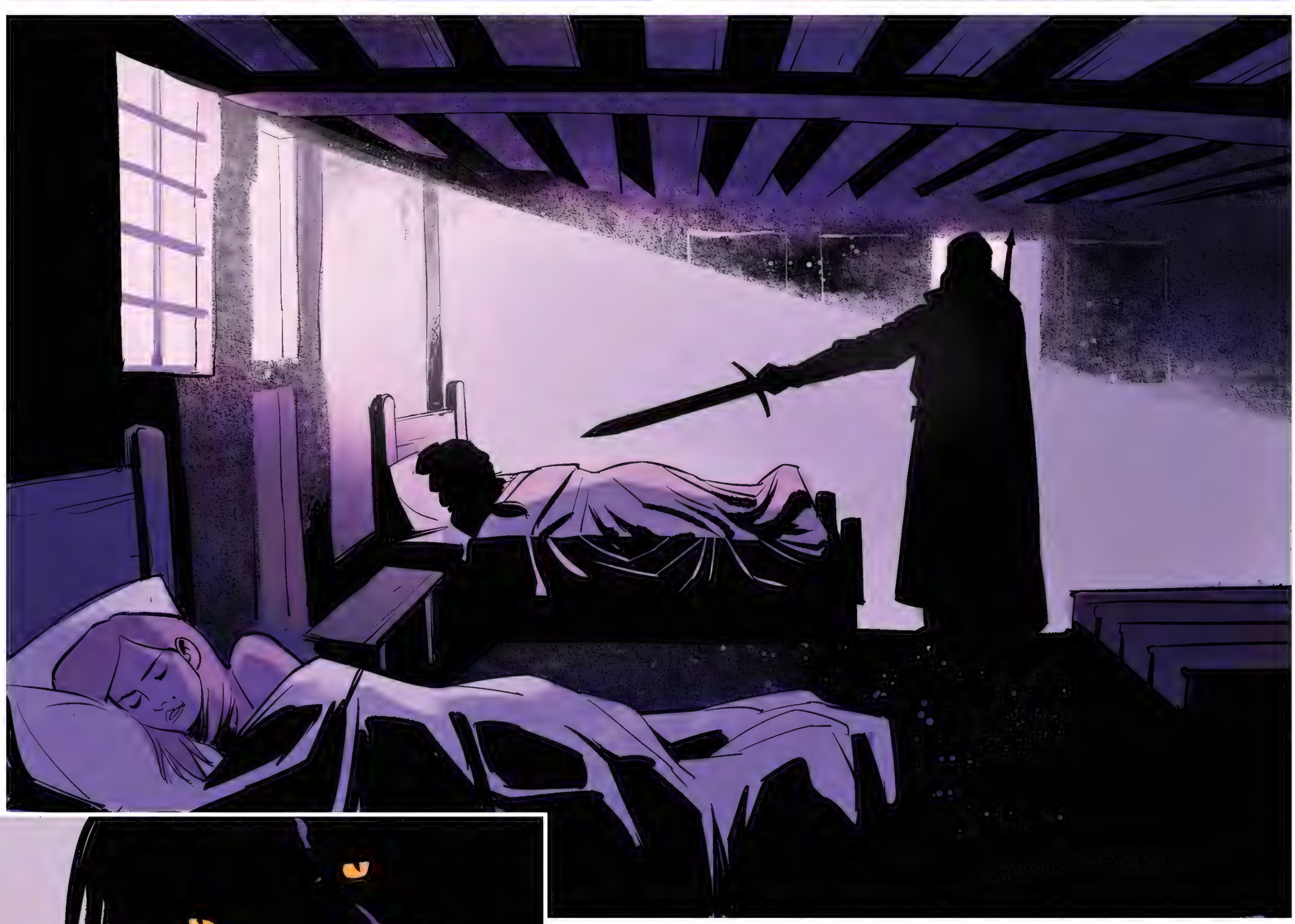
Playing the innocent...

DANDELION, TAKE KURT TO AN INN SOMEWHERE NEARBY. KOPEK CAN'T SEE YOU TWO.

AND PIOTER, YOU HAVE TO TELL KOPEK THAT KURT'S BEEN KILLED. AND THAT I WANT TO SEE EVERYONE TOMORROW AT NOON AT THE HOGGES'.











Shhhh.

I won't hurt you.

I FIGURED IT ALL OUT.

I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TOMORROW AT NOON AT THE HOGGE HOUSE. BRING GRANNY, BUT DON'T TELL HER I WAS HERE. GOT IT?

BY THE WAY, DO YOU REMEMBER A SPOT, IN THE HOUSE, OR MAYBE BEHIND IT, WHERE YOU SAW GRANNY ACTING STRANGE?

SHE WAS NERVOUS WHEN YOU MENTIONED IT? SHE WAS DOING SOMETHING BACK THERE, AT ODD HOURS?

YEAH, THERE'S A PLACE LIKE THAT...

AND?

FIND ANYTHING?

NOTHING HERE--

WHAT?!

WHAT IS THAT?!

NO!

STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

DON'T COME ANYWHERE NEAR HERE, JUST STAY AWAY!

JUST TAKE... *GRANNY*... WITH YOU, AND BE AT THE HOGGES' AT...

"...NOON."

WHERE IS HE?!

I WON'T STAY HERE A MINUTE LONGER! RED, LET'S GO!

CALM DOWN, GRAN, IF HE'S NOT HERE IN A FEW MIN--

HE'S *ALIVE?!* YOU TRICKED ME! YOU TOLD ME THE WITCHER *KILLED HIM!*

NO! I WON'T BE IN THE SAME ROOM AS A *MURDERER!*

WELL, YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT *ONE* THING.

THERE IS INDEED A *MURDERER* IN THIS ROOM.

IS KURT GRIMM A MURDERER?

"HE HAD A *MOTIVE.*

"AND HIS PAST ACTIONS *DEFINITELY* PROVE HE'S CAPABLE OF TAKING A LIFE."

THE PERFECT MURDERER.

BUT *WHY* WOULD HE NEED TO ATTACK RED?

WHY WOULD HE ORDER RED AND HER GRAN TO LEAVE GRIMMWALD? WHAT, TO DO A FAVOR FOR THE HOGGE SISTERS?

I SWEAR I WASN'T LYING!

A WEREWOLF *ATTACKED ME* BEFORE TELLING ME THE HOGGE SISTERS AND *PIOTER* SENT HIM!

RED IS TELLING THE TRUTH, BUT SHE'S WRONG ON ONE COUNT. IT *WASN'T* A WEREWOLF.

BUT A DOPPLER *SHAPE SHIFTING* AS ONE!

"PIOTER WAS BRAGGING ABOUT HOW HE KILLED ONE OF TWO DOPPLERS THAT WERE GOING AROUND SHAPE SHIFTING, ROBBING GRIMMWALDIANS."

AYE, RUN, YE THIEVIN' PIECE O' SCUM! BUT SOONER OR LATER YE'LL FIND A CROSSBOW BOLT RIPPIN' YER THROAT OUT!

"HATRED! REVENGE!

"THE PERFECT MOTIVE FOR A DOPPLER WHO'D LOST HIS COMPANION TO KILL PIOTER AND THE HOGGE SISTERS."

AT FIRST, I IGNORED THIS ANGLE, THINKING IT WAS A RED HERRING. I DIDN'T THINK THE DOPPLER WOULD WANT TO STICK AROUND.

BUT STICK AROUND HE DID, PLAYING THE INNOCENT...

...GRANNY!

NO, NO! NOT TRUE!

"ANXIOUS AND UNCERTAIN... EVEN HER EYES'VE CHANGED'-- THAT'S WHAT RED TOLD ME WHEN SHE HIRED ME.

"SHE SENSED THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT HER GRANNY. DAMN RIGHT, BECAUSE THAT WASN'T GRANNY AT ALL!

"AND IT WASN'T A WEREWOLF STEALING THE SILVER FROM THE INN. SILVER PREVENTS DOPPLERS FROM SHAPE SHIFTING.

"I PUT IT ALL TOGETHER. THE FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE WAS GRANNY'S BODY, RESTING IN HER GARDEN."

I DIDN'T KILL *NOBODY!*

GRANNY HELPED ME WHEN I WAS RUNNIN' FROM PIOTER! FED ME, HID ME, AN'... ONE DAY SHE UP AN' DIED. *I SWEAR!*

IT'S POSSIBLE. HER BODY SHOWED NO SIGNS OF VIOLENCE.

MOST DOPPLERS CAN'T KILL. NOT IN THEIR NATURE. THAT'S WHY YOU WERE DOING EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER TO FORCE ME TO KILL PIOTER AND THE SISTERS FOR YOU.

EVEN TURNED INTO A WEREWOLF AND ATTACKED RED.

I'm sorry...
DON'T TOUCH ME!
THIEVIN' BUGGER... UNDER ME NOSE... *Poxy whore...*
WHO MURDERED OUR POOR SISTER?!
"SOMEONE WHO WAS PRETENDING TO MAKE PEACE WITH REALITY, BUT WAS HARBORING A SECRET HE COULDN'T LIVE WITH ANYMORE.
"SOMEONE WHOSE HATRED GREW AND GREW, DAY AFTER DAY.
"IT GREW SO MUCH THAT WHEN I WANTED TO LEAVE GRIMMWALD, HE WAS PREPARED TO MURDER AN INNOCENT WOMAN, JUST TO GIVE *ME* THE MOTIVE TO KI[illegible]"
ENOUGH!
IT'S ME, YOU HEAR? I'M THE MURDERER!
I KILLED THAT BITCH, AND MY ONLY REGRET IS MISSING MY OPPORTUNITY TO END THE OTHER TWO!
SHUT UP!

DON'T YOU *DARE* PLAY THE *LOVING BROTHER!*

oh, NOW YOU WANT TO SACRIFICE YOURSELF FOR ME?! AFTER YOU SACRIFICED ME FOR YOURSELF?!

YOU STOLE MY LIFE!

LOOK AT ME!

I NEVER WANTED MUCH IN THIS LIFE...

...BUT YOU...

...YOU ALWAYS WANTED MORE. YOU COULDN'T JUST DROP IT, START OVER... OR SWALLOW YOUR STUPID PRIDE AND WORK FOR THEM.

TH-THEY SWINDLED HIM...

PA SWINDLED HIMSELF! HE DRANK AND WHORED IT ALL AWAY!

YOU'RE JUST LIKE HIM.

JUST LIKE HIM, EVERYTHING YOU DO, YOU DO FOR YOURSELF!

YOU NEVER ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT, YOU NEVER ASKED WHAT I WANTED. I HATE YOU. EVERY NIGHT I DREAM OF YOU DYING IN AGON--

HHNN!

TCHAK!

KID...?

KIYY!

DIE...

BAM!

POOAK!

I'LL KILL YOU!

PUT HER DOWN, YE FECKIN--

Oof!

THWACK

ENOUGH, KURT!

DON'T MAKE ME DRAW MY SWORD.

DROP YOUR WEAPON OR THIS WILL END BADLY.

In a heartbeat, the wolf headed Geralt,
begged forgiveness on one knee.

At his words,
the brother leapt from the earth, with new eyes did he see.

In love's eternal spring,
two brothers quickly drowned.

And in that wonderful moment,

joy was spread all round.

As ever, Geralt's choice left behind a happy folk full of love...

...and the Ballad of Two Wolves flew to a happy end on the wings of a dove.

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN IT ALL, WITCHER, BUT YOU MISSED ONE THING.

WE AIN'T IN A FAIRY TALE, AND THIS WAS NEVER GOING TO HAVE A HAPPY ENDING.

DON'T DO THIS...!

THEY SWINDLED HIM... ALL OF US...

AACHK-!

"AS EVER...

"...GERALT'S CHOICE LEFT BEHIND...

"...A HAPPY FOLK FULL OF LOVE...

"...AND THE BALLAD OF TWO WOLVES FLEW TO A HAPPY END ON THE WINGS OF A DOVE."

THE WITCHER: THE BALLAD OF TWO WOLVES # 1 VARIANT COVER ART BY
JAKUB REBELKA

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THE WITCHER: THE BALLAD OF TWO WOLVES #2 VARIANT COVER ART BY
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THE WITCHER®

THE BALLAD OF TWO WOLVES

Geralt begins a new hunt in a story inspired by a classic fable or even two! Hailed as the greatest monster slayer, Geralt is beckoned to the town of Grimmwald. When a strange occurrence stirs murmurs of a werewolf on the prowl, rumors spread surrounding the arrival of three wealthy sisters. But change brings about more than fear and anger: it can create new enemies—even monsters. While Geralt is busy solving the mystery and slaying the beast, Dandelion may just find the inspiration he needs to write the perfect ballad.



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